IN A CITY GARDEN by J·R·AITKEN

IN A CITY GARDEN

"WHATSOEVER IS BEAUTY
[illegible]
PURE AND BLOOM AND SWEET SEEMS,
[illegible]"

IN A CITY GARDEN

BY J. R. AITKEN

AUTHOR OF 'MY GARDEN OF THE RED, RED ROSE,' 'LOVE IN ITS TENDERNESS,' 'THE SINS OF A SAINT,' 'THE CHRIST OF THE MEN OF ART.'

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR BY KATHARINE CAMERON, R.S.W.

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TO

THE GREAT COMPANY

WHO

LOVE NATURE

AND YET

ARE CALLED

TO SPEND THEIR YEARS

IN TOWN

THE LIST OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

From Water-colour Drawings by
KATHARINE CAMERON, R.S.W.

NOTE

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FLOWER OF THE WORLD

Wherever men sinned and wept,
I wandered in my quest;
At last in a Garden of God,
I saw the Flower of the World.

Whatever was formless and base,
Pass'd into fineness and form;
Whatever was lifeless and mean
Grew into beautiful bloom.

Then I thought, "O Flower of the World,
Miraculous Blossom of things,
Light as a faint wreath of snow,
Thou tremblest to fall in the wind.

"O beautiful Flower of the World,
Fall not nor wither away;
He is coming—he cannot be far—
The Lord of the Flow'rs and the Stars."

And I cried, "O Spirit divine!
That walkest the Garden unseen,
Come hither, and bless, ere it dies,
The beautiful Flower of the World."

ROBERT BUCHANAN

PROLOGUE BY J. R. AITKEN

I AM NOT ALONE IN MY LOVE. All over the world, in countless cities of every clime, a great company which no man can number knows the joy of trees and flowers and the hunger of spacious places. It may be doubted, but I deem it true that the mystic love of Nature and the unfolding glory of the flowers is deeper in the heart of many a city-dweller than in the life of many who spend their years in quiet country places. It may be because our eyes chance so seldom to see the face of the Great Mother, or because the life of the city, with its round of business, pleasure, and care, calls forth the hunger of our hearts, and gives wing to our longing for the Mother's touch. However it be, twelve years spent in the country, and many more in town, have made it plain to me that the poetry of flowers and the love of green fields is deeper in the city than in the silent places. Called by the toil of life to spend their years in crowded streets, they cry for the kiss of the moors and the smile of the hills. Prisoners of earth, they call for their freedom. Deep in their heart, placed deep by a Kind Hand, and deep in the memory of distant years, is the love of the

Great Mother. Weary and heavy, hungry and footsore, they long for the joy of her touch and the peace of her rest.

A Royal Garden in the Grey City of the North, is the Garden of my heart. One of three maintained by the British realm, it is my compensation in lieu of the vast spaces. A Botanic Garden, an Arboretum, and a School of Forestry, thousands of students all over the world have learnt to love it. Scattered far, they carry its love in their hearts, and think often of the Royal Garden of our romantic City. And, if they love it who knew it merely in the swift-passing years of their curriculum, and see it only now in dreams, much more we who see it every day, and find in it healing all the years round.

Not as a botanist, or expert in Latin names, do I write of our City Garden, but as one whose soul seeks "the beautiful Flower of the World." Flowers are to me what they were to Goethe, "the beautiful hieroglyphics of Nature by which she indicates how much she loves us." When I walk in the Garden, I hear the flowers, and the seasons, and the poets who understand, speaking their words of hope

and rest. I hear Spenser calling through the years,

"The Lilly, Ladye of the flow'ring field,
The flowre-de-luce, her lovely Paramoure,
Bid thee to them thy fruitlesse labours yield,
And soone leave off this toylesome, weary
stoure."

Nature is to me the Great Mother, and lovely as she is kind. I can sing with Tennyson,

"My Mother looks as whole as some serene
Creature minted in the golden moods
Of sovereign artists; not a thought, a touch,
But pure as lines of green that streak the
white
Of the first Snowdrop's inner leaves."

One of "earth's little ones," who fain would "play about the Mother's hem," as William Morris puts it, every gift of sun and wind, flower and tree, gladdens me. Even in our City Garden these gifts are scattered freely, and it is possible to be glad, though the heart longs often after vaster things.

It is with the vision, too, of a Kind Hand I come to the side of the Great Mother. The riddle may be dark, but, with that vision, it is possible to read some of the mystic writing and

to catch the drift of many a kind and gracious process. With Cowper, I "trace a Hand that errs not" and "find raptures still renew'd." In every form and lineament divine, the Kind Hand leaves its mark. And, it is our faith that "there lives and works a soul in all things," and that "that soul is God." Hence, to me,

"Not a flow'r
But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain
Of His unrivall'd pencil. He inspires
Their balmy odours, and imparts their hues,
And bathes their eyes with nectar."

In our City Garden, as in the country, it is possible to mark the "touch" of the "unrivall'd pencil," and to breathe the "balmy odours" and look upon "eyes" bathed "with nectar."

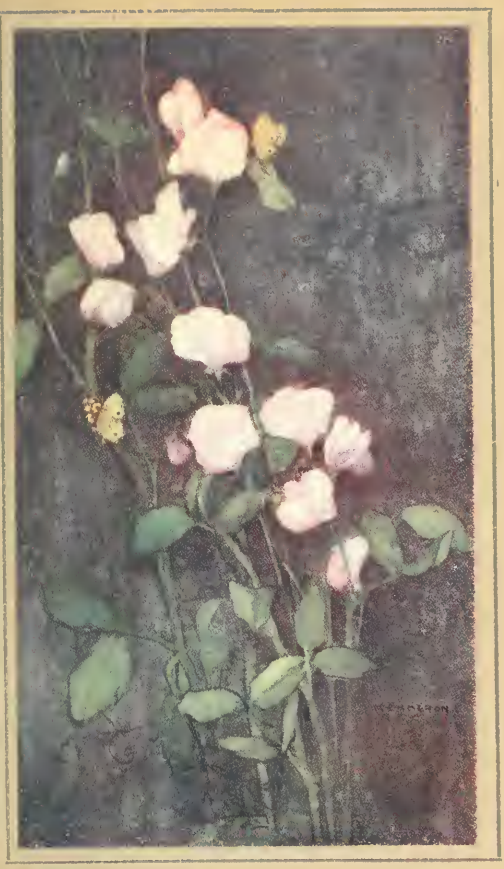
The poets may be wrong, and the seers may have woven their visions out of the fancies of their souls. Men may find it hard to walk in the Garden, to-day, and hear a Voice speaking. But it wakes the singing birds in the heart to hold this faith and gives new lustre to the eye. And, with the "singing birds" awake, I make bold to write with Coleridge the words of his great sonnet.

PROLOGUE

"It may indeed be phantasy, when I
Essay to draw from all created things
Deep, heartfelt, inward joy that closely
clings;
And trace in leaves and flowers that round
me lie
Lessons of love and earnest piety.
So let it be; and if the wide world rings
In mock of this belief, it brings
Nor fear, nor grief, nor vain perplexity.
So will I build my altar in the fields
And the blue sky my fretted dome shall be,
And the sweet fragrance that the wild-flower
yields
Shall be the incense I will yield to Thee,
Thee, only God! And Thou shalt not despise
Even me, the priest of this poor sacrifice."

It may indeed be "phantasy," but one could wish that this great "phantasy," with all its joy and hope, were the great and happy possession of all who walk

In a City Garden.



'SWEET PEAS OF ALL KINDS'

THE QUESTION

I dreamed that, as I wandered by the way,
  Bare winter suddenly was changed to spring;
And gentle odours led my steps astray,
  Mixed with the sound of waters murmuring
Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay
  Under a copse and hardly dared to fling
Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,
But kissed it and then fled as thou mightest in dream.

There grew pied wind-flowers and violets,
  Daisies, those pearled Arcturi of the earth,
The constellated flower that never sets;
  Faint oxslips, tender bluebells; at whose birth
The sod scarce heaved; and that tall flower that wets—
  Like a child, half in tenderness and mirth,
Its mother's face with heaven-collected tears,
When the low wind its playmate's voice it hears.

SHELLEY

SPRING BY J. R. AITKEN

OUR CITY CAN BOAST OF gardens and open spaces meet for a garden-city, and her happy dwellers have free use even of the Royal Garden of which I write. Open all the year round to every subject of the King, more than half a million pass yearly through its gates, though many times has it seemed to me I alone walked its green lawns. Silence and song, bud and blossom, shrub and tree, fair sward and dark wood, wild flower and tropical gem, all are here, and, given what Cowper calls the "mansion for all lovely forms" and memory "for all sweet sounds and harmonies," the unfolding glory of the year can be seen even in our City Garden. And, not in ours only, but in City Gardens many, throughout the wide, wide world.

What is the loveliest of earth's contrasts, think you? Is it green and white, as the wise and fair tell us? Then, here in our City Garden, whoso has eyes of light may see it, and open them wide in wonder. So fresh, and pale, and tender are the greens of tree and lawn, in the soft spring of the year, that one can but fancy the Master Painter is eager to outdo in delicacy all the wonder of the world. So white,

and frail, and fair are the flowers and blossoms of spring that one can but think the Great Artist has mixed his colours so that His brush will paint only the purest whites and fairest shades in spring, keeping the deeper hues and warmer tints for the days when summer suns shall glow. Fresh, and pale, and tender, the greens will deepen only too fast, and the flowers take on fuller and richer colours. White, white tipped with pink or crimson, pale yellow, shining gold, light orange, fairest purple, these are the colours of Spring, even in a City Garden—snowdrops, cherry blossom, apple blossom, wild pear, wild cherry, iris, narcissus, daffodil, primrose, cowslip, wood anemone, scarlet pimpernel, starry celandine, violets, these are the jewels of Spring, and all are here in our City Garden. A wonder is it that God has stirred the song of the poets, and waked the music of the sleeping choir at the call of Spring, amid the pale greens and fair blossoms of the waking world? No wonder, I tell you, no wonder at all.

The music of Nature, too, one can hear, and judge well, even in our City Garden. If it were a choice between a night at a concert and an hour in the King's Garden, there is no doubt

where the choice would fall. Happily, however, the fates are not so hard: our concerts close before the sleeping choirs are at their best. Almost all our singing birds are here, and many more that do not sing, but make a joyful noise. The full, deep notes of the blackbird thrill us from early spring. I say "thrill," for the first notes of the blackbird, heard in early spring, take hold of the very flesh, and make it quiver for greatness of joy. The rich, mellow notes of the thrush, twice repeated, reveal to us the "soul of music," and are the joy of the garden. The "pink, pink" of the chaffinch, the merry ditty of the robin and the wren, the light song of the linnet, and the wooing music of the ringdove, all may be heard. If there be joy in the speech of the rook, it, too, may be heard (for we have even a Rookery in our City Garden), and, sometimes, the call of a stray cock pheasant may be heard on the lawns.

Indeed, the only birds I miss specially are the lark, and the nightingale, and the cuckoo. The lark, of which I never think but there comes to me the beauty of Shelley's matchless Ode:

"Hail to thee, blithe spirit
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art."

The nightingale, of which I never dream, but I fly away to a dark English lane, and listen to the song of the charmer for the first time, in a spinney dear to the heart of Cowper, by the Wilderness, Weston Underwood. The cuckoo, that wild disturber of nests of which I never speak but I find myself a boy again away in an island of the West, drinking in the music of the waters and the sylvan call of the cuckoo, all the day long. These three only I miss in our City Garden. All the others come, and sing to us their life-cheering songs.

Rich are we in singing birds in this old land of ours, and rich in their healing songs even in our City Garden. Day by day I listen to them, and wonder, and rejoice. I cannot tell (can you?) what it is, in their singing that touches the silent deeps of human life, our care-worn souls, our grief-stained faces, and makes our silence break into song, our care attune itself to their sweet melodies, and our grief lift at the call of

their gladness. They have power to cheer and bless, God's singing birds, denied, often, to preacher, poet, seer, and, something more, they have power to make men sing. I, even, have they made to sing. One day, I passed through our City's street, and came to another of our City Gardens, our much-admired Princes Street Gardens. And, as I passed, I heard a thrush singing in the Garden right against the Castle Rock. Then, the wind that bloweth where it listeth swept over the scene, and there came to me this

Ode
to a Thrush Singing in a City Garden

I

I hear thee sing, with mellow-throatèd ease
Thy love-song sweet, amid the shooting green,
I hear thee flute thy melodies of peace
Edina's storied battlements among, till sheen
Of woods in Spring and fragrant dells
Laden with violets and vocal with choirs, doth lease
Me their joy and lead me to wells

Of liquid mirth like thine,
The golden music mine,
O singing thrush,
O mellow thrush!

II

Who gave thee, first of singing birds, thy lore?
Who bade thee pipe while yet the world is brown?
What dream of rare creative skill (before
The sleeping choirs had found their waking song, or gown
Of fairest green our Lady Spring
Had donn'd, rising from whitèd sheets or snow or hoar)
Made Love thy great and only King?
Gave thee his bridal song?
Deep laid within thy heart a throng
Of mystic words that first take wing
In thy love-songs and soar,
O singing thrush,
O mellow thrush?

III

Swift speed the glories of the changing year,
Fleet run the flaming days of sun and moon,
Soon, soon, the darkening night is here,

And songs are lull'd to rest, e'en bridal songs,
till swoon
Of Sleep lies on our nestlings' nest.
What then? Hath fair creative skill no thrush
to bear
A gladdening song, at One's behest?
Hath Love no sylvan glades
Low-lying far beyond the shades
Of Doom? Where Death is lull'd to rest?
And day ne'er comes to noon?
O singing thrush,
O mellow thrush?

IV

"There is a songster of eternal Spring!
A love-bird piping in the vale of Doom!
There is a melody whose rapturous ring
Fast holds the listening Heaven! For Love's
chief vaulted room
Is built beyond the frowning Night,
And all God's choir is taught to sing, is glad to
sing!"
I hear't, afar, the song of light,
Its flutèd notes like thine,
Its golden music mine,
O singing thrush,
O mellow thrush!

IN A CITY GARDEN

Early in Spring, the sun shone, and I made holyday and walked in the Garden. The air was big with great expectancy, the hum of the bee was in the heather, and, everywhere, near and far, rose the song of the birds in the sunshine. Rich, healing, soothing, joy-giving, was the song; so rich and healing that one was led to forget the toil that tired our hands, the care that soiled our souls; and so soothing and joy-giving, that it was easy to think the fret and fury of the world was but a vanity, and the need for a new heaven and a new earth but a dream. Does God with the song of a thrush wipe away men's tears? Is Christ in the music of Nature bearing our burden still? The City at our feet, and the great busy world beyond, would it not be lifted and gladdened with the song; might its strife, and wrong, and shame not pass, some of it, if it stood with us now in our City Garden, and opened its great pained heart to the music of the Spring? Rich are we, did I say? and poor would the world be without the song of the birds. So true this, and so worthy of all acceptation, that, daily, the Angel That Gives Thanks passes through the Garden, and comes to my favourite seat, and writes in letters of

gold: "Hear, O Earth, and sing, O Men, for the healing song of the birds."

The Garden has its drawing spots and its nooks of special honour. In the south is the Rock Garden, early aglow with spring flowers and always a marvel of work, but too restless for one spirit. To the west is our "wood" or "spinney," with its winding grass walks, its dark firs, its wild flowers, its sense of mystery. Babes may be lost there, and the whole world of romance find enchantment within its shades. Restful, luring, full of wild woodland flowers, it draws me every time I enter. In it I found my first snowdrop (more of it, anon), my first forget-me-not, wood anemone, scarlet pimpernel, the glossy starry celandine, heart's-ease, cowslip, oxlip, primrose, violet, and a host of other loved ones. So dark is the "wood," sometimes, I have known some city girls afraid to enter, and to speak with hushed voices as they passed. The fear of the shade and dark of Nature is deep, I find, in the heart of many a city dweller. Even when they are old, they fear to enter a darkened wood, and hush their voices as though in a Chamber of Spirits. Eastward in the Garden is our tiny

"lake," fringed with yellow gorse, and all manner of meadow-sweet, and river-flowers. In the centre of the garden is the "hill," with its charming view of our great City, its domes and spires, its war-scarred Castle and wind-swept streets, guarded by Arthur's Seat and flanked by the Pentlands. Westward is the Rookery, in Spring a place of huge interest and almost humorous enterprize. On the north-east, in a sheltered nook, lies the Rose Garden. To the north of this are the Conservatories and a Paradise of rhododendrons. And, away to the north-west, yet sheltered from the wind, is the great Herbaceous Border, a perpetual wonder.

When February came every tree in the Garden was bare (save our great heaven of evergreens), though the shrubs were already beginning to shoot and the ribes were red like blood. The yellow jasmine was in bloom on the "hill," and quite a number of rhododendrons were in flower. In a nook to the north of the Keeper's House a clump of these were flowering early in January. Everywhere the bulbs were sending up their spikes, in the borders, in beds, round trees—iris, crocus, snow-

drop, narcissus, daffodil, and all their joyous following. The Rock Garden was ablaze, and the heather was already on fire away round by the glass houses. It was cold and sunless, but the Spirit of Spring was turning already in her sleep. If only the cold would pass the flowers would break into bloom, and the Garden leap for joy.

But a spell of frost followed, and, when I came again, toward the end of the month, the rain fell and the wind blew so keen that I was glad to shelter in the glass houses. Here it was as if 'twere summer. The cold wind sighed without, and the rain lashed against the panes, but tropical "weather" reigned within, and flowers of all sorts, in rich and glowing profusion, met the eye. In particular, I noted a fine show of cyclamen, cineraria, primula of every hue, acacia shrubs with showers of lovely yellow bloom, red japonica, and roses of fragrant beauty, white, pink, and red—the Eliza Robichon, Valentine Beaulieu, and Belle de Bordeaux. But, though they bloomed in almost summer glory, the wind howled without, and never a flower came to greet us in our City Garden. It must have been of such a late

Spring, methinks, Aubrey de Vere wrote his poem entitled *February*.

"What dost thou, laggard Daffodil,
Tarrying so long beneath the sod?
Hesper, thy mate, o'er yonder hill,
Looks down, and strikes with silver rod
The pools that mirrored thee last year,
Yet cannot find thee far nor near."

And, one felt inclined to lift up his voice, and call, with the poet, to the laggard flower,

"Rise up, thou Daffodil, rise! with thee
The year begins, and the Springtide glee."

A week later, I came again, early in March—came from the grave of one who fought a good fight, and whom we had laid to sleep in the sunshine. Here, in the Garden, was sunshine also, and healing, and sweet forgetfulness. Mezereum was blooming on the "hill," with blushing wreaths, as Cowper sings, investing every spray. Rhododendrons lighted all the Garden with their blaze of varied colours. The wind still blew, and, as I stood on the "hill," heard it rise and fall, and marked its pauses and the silences between, I thought of Gray's pretty fancy as he listened to the breeze, heard it rise and fall, pause, remember itself, and rise again, like the

swell of Eolian harp. "I do assure you," said Gray, "there is nothing in the world so like the voice of a spirit."

Passing round the Garden, I looked at the rose trees, and got my first drink of the glorious vintage of sweet briar. The sunshine was my butler, and drew the fragrance from the shooting leaves for me, and handed me the cup. I know of no more satisfying draught than the rich fragrance of sweet briar in early spring. It is a joy to live and drink it in with open mouth. Thence I came to the "wood," and found it a banquet chamber where the Lord of the Vineyard had spread His table with the choicest of wild flowers. Here was that dainty little flower the wild heart's-ease or pansy, already in bloom, the same that Shakespeare calls Love in Idleness, in "Midsummer Night's Dream":

"Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell—
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purpled with love's wound,
And maidens call it Love in Idleness."

Looking at it, and loving it, for its own sake and its pretty story's sake, I thought of Bun-

yan's winsome picture of a boy singing beside his sheep. "Do you hear him?" asks Bunyan. "I will dare to say this boy leads a merrier life, and wears more of that herb called heart's-ease in his bosom, than he that is clothed in silk and purple."

Beside the heart's-ease were flowering forget-me-nots, about which maidens sigh, casting loving eyes swainward, a pretty flower round which there is written many a pretty story from the legend of its origin to the tale of the garden of forget-me-nots that sprang up in the field of Waterloo, in the spring that followed the great fight—Nature's own sweet call for remembrance of the heroes who fought and fell on both sides. You know, of course, the legend of the name? A drowning knight, it declares, flung a handful of the "bonnie wee flower" to his lady love, and cried, "Forget me not!" as he sank beneath the flood. Coleridge loved this flower, and called it "Hope's gentle gem."

Blooming in the "wood," too, was the wild anemone, with its snowy buds and beautifully formed leaves. It is one of the wild flowers that is exceedingly sensitive to atmospheric changes, and it is a fair little weather prophet for the

'POPPIES OF ALL SORTS'

wise. When storms threaten, it shuts its flower and retires like an angel-spirit into its white mansions. Here, in our City Garden, if you walk through the "wood" at such a time,

"Between the gloaming and the mirk,
When the kye come hame,"

you will find its door "locked and barred" against the coming storm. Named of the wind, George Macdonald makes it call "Take me or leave me, sweet wind, I am thine own anemone," a haughty madam, as you see, yet more loving, and loved, than proud.

The scarlet pimpernel, its fellow-prophet of the rain, is here, also, in our little "wood," with its glowing chalice and soft raiment. The "fire-winged Pimpernel," Macdonald calls it, and speaks of it communing with some hidden well, and holding secrets with the Sun-God, "at fixed hour folding and unfolding." By its side, was blooming Wordsworth's favourite flower, the starry celandine,

"Spreading out its glossy breast
Like a careless prodigal;
Telling tales about the sun
When we've little warmth or none."

A "kindly, unassuming spirit," and a "prophet

of delight and mirth" to him, Wordsworth loved it "thirty years or more," and placed it higher than pansy, lily, kingcup, daisy, primrose, and violet. Few will follow him in his adoration of this modest flower, but, certainly, it is one of the heralds of a mighty band.

By the middle of March, the Rookery in our City Garden was a busy scene of love and hope. The clumsy, solemn, humorous rooks had told their ladies each his love story, and were inviting them to the homely task of setting up house. Waving in the breeze on the topmost branches of the trees, there they were putting their sticks in order, and busy, in spite of wind and rain, making a palace, with the sky for its ceiling, for the little black knights and ladies who would bear their honoured names. The week had been broken and the rhododendrons had been washed by the rain, and the yellow jasmine swept by the wind, but the rooks took heed of none of these things, and went on building for a future day. The shimmer of green in the garden told them they were right, and they sang to each other, loud above the wind and rain, "Spring is coming"—long before the swallows came.

SPRING IN A CITY GARDEN

It was not till Good Friday I entered the Garden again, after a spell of fair Spring weather. The day was bracing, with frequent April showers and spells of sunshine, now dark with clouds and rain, black as the grave and dark as the world-tragedy on the "green hill far away," and now hopeful, with a patch of blue and bit of sunshine breaking through, bright as the hope of the coming Easter morning. "In the place where He was crucified there was a garden," I had read in the Gospel of the Blessed Bosom Saint. And there came to me the kind thought, meant, surely, by St John, that the Garden of the Crucifixion ministered to the Nazarene, at the last. It was Spring. The flowers bloomed, and the birds sang. The Great Nature-Lover turned to them in His agony. The wind of God carried the fragrance of the Garden to the Cross. And, in the hush that fell on the throng at the last, a bird lifted up its vesper, and sang to the Sufferer on the Tree. Poetry? Verily, I say unto you, "Worthy of all acceptation."

But, to come back to our City Garden. So "growing" had the weather been since last I entered, things had much advanced. If Spring had not come "laughing by vale and hill," as Aus-

tin Dobson has it, it had, certainly, come with a smile. The budding flowerets were blushing in the light, and the "fresh young cowslips," of which poor Chatterton sang so sweetly, were bending with the "dews" of Spring. The rooks had finished building, and, vindicated of their love-song, were lying low, waiting for a day that would call them blessed. Ten days later it came, and the young rooks made proud the hearts of their fathers. Twenty years ago there were over a hundred nests. Last year thirty-one. This year only ten. So the census is turning out badly for the rooks as well as for the City.

After Easter came warmer weather, and when I passed through the Garden, again, every bird was singing, bees were gathering honey from the flowers, and a cloud of gnats were playing in the sun. All over the Garden the trees were unfolding their buds, and it looked a fairy scene in tender green. One old twisted oak, by a bank of daffodils, was lazily following its quicker tree-mates, and putting on slowly its spring garment. A purple mist hung over the branches of the graceful beech with its long leaf-cases. The limes, with their luxurious softness and beauty of leaf, were making fine progress,

and "The Lady of The Wood," the silver birch, was already entangled in her graceful spray. Though far from being in full leaf yet, they were all putting on their beautiful garments and filling the world with gladness.

The first bloom, too, had come. The wild pear was a mass of pink and white blossom. The wild cherry a sea of white foam. The wild gooseberry a bed of purple. The rose trees were in half leaf, and the sweet briar sweeter than ever. The grass was growing swiftly, and the gardeners, with their white ponies, were hard at work mowing the lawns. The rhododendrons had shed their rain-soaked clusters and taken on new blooms, and all over the garden, in every hue and colour, were lifting themselves in showy pride, vulgarly calling for admiration. Finer far, to me, were the golden daffodils with their frail, entrancing beauty. They had heard the call of the laggard Spring and come to their gold at last. We have them in beds all to themselves, or in rings round some of our trees, or on banks among the green grass, or in unsuspected clumps, here, there, and everywhere, all over the Garden, and wherever they meet the eye they gladden it. I know a patch in a field, grow-

ing wild, away down in Warwickshire. There they often grow wild, coming up year after year, in fields or by river banks—whence the "daffodillies fill their cups with tears." The Turks call them "The Golden Bowl," and Herrick has a pretty, though rather mournful, little poem on them:

THE DAFFODILS

"Faire Daffodils, we weepe to see
You haste away so soone:
As yet the early rising Sun
Has not attained his Noone.
Stay, stay,
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the Even-song;
And having pray'd together, we
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay as you,
We have as short a Spring;
As quick a growth to meet Decay,
As you, or anything.
We die,
As your hours doe, and drie
Away,

Like to the Summer's raine:
Or as the pearles of Morning's dew
Ne'er to be found againe."

Wordsworth, also, hears the music of the daffodils, and sings of them, more joyously, though scarce as prettily as Herrick. Mrs Hinkson, one of the sweetest of our modern singers, has a little gem, entitled "The Daffodils." To me, however, the most haunting thing on our golden flower (remembering all) is this from the pen of Oscar Wilde.

"There is a tiny yellow daffodil,
The butterfly can see it from afar,
Although one summer evening's dew
could fill
Its little cup twice over, ere the star
Had called the lazy shepherd to his fold,
And be no prodigal."

In the "wood" of our Garden, to which, unfailingly, I am drawn, the air is sweet with violets running wild, the "fast fading violets covered up with leaves," of which Keats sings so finely. But, who would not sing prettily of the violet? It is, I think, the best sung of all Spring flowers, though the daisy, the daffodil, the primrose, and the cowslip run it close. In

our City Garden, it loses little of its sweetness and none of its charm. And, when the "sweet south" "breathes" upon it in the wood, "stealing and giving odours," one loves it with a deathless love. In many gardens in Shakespeare's country, from Stratford-on-Avon to Evesham, have I found it growing in rich abundance, as fragrant as in Shakespeare's day. With the sun upon it, and the south wind stealing through its leaves, one is swift to share the joy of the Master in this deep, little, purple flower.

Primroses, also, bloom in the "wood" of our City Garden, "the fragrant messengers of Spring" Coleridge calls them, and the pale cowslip "fit for maiden's early bier." Down in Kent the man of the soil calls the cowslip "a fairy cup," and old Ben Jonson goes into raptures at its sight. From the time of Milton to the days of Christina Rossetti it has been one of the best loved of English poets' flowers, and one that is destined yet to ring out many a song. In Buckinghamshire, as in many parts of England, they make wine from the pale yellow flowers, and whoso has tasted Buckinghamshire cowslip wine has no desire for the choicest vintage of France. "Delicately pale,"

with "pensive head," a "pearl" in every ear, a "tear" in every cup, the cowslip sings its song of gladness here in our City Garden, it and a thousand other sister-flowers. Rich are we, rich beyond all telling, for the "song" of the flowers, and rich, too, because of their mystic healing.

A new Heaven and a new Earth, did I say? A new earth we are getting every spring in every City Garden. The new Heaven we must build in the streets of the city itself.

MIDSUMMER POMPS

When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,
  Before the roses and the longest day—
When garden-walks and all the grassy floor
  With blossoms red and white of fallen May
    And chestnut-flowers are strewn—
So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
  From the wet field, through the vast garden-trees,
  Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze:
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I!

Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,
  Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
Soon shall we have gold-dusted snap-dragon,
  Sweet-William and his homely cottage-smell,
    And stocks in fragrant blow;
Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
  And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,
  And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,
And the full moon and the white evening star.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

SUMMER BY J. R. AITKEN

IT WERE VAIN TO LOOK FOR THE vast in a City Garden, spacious wood, field, hill, and loch, yet we have all in miniature, and space enough to see the summer's glory. Here, in our woods and sheltered nooks, on our green lawns and wind-swept hill, as by our tiny lake, Nature holds her thousand sunlit censers, and woos with mystic spell the man who loves her—yet finds himself in city pent. The wind that bloweth where it listeth bloweth even in our City Garden, and great is the joy thereat of many a city dweller.

With the coming of May, Spring bids the world good-bye, and Summer leaps to meet her destiny. And what a destiny is hers! "Full leaved and strong," as Austin Dobson calls her, she kisses with beauty and lavish splendour every shrub and tree, every flower and bloom, within reach of her crimson lips. The King who sends her on His radiant errand, sends her even to our city streets. And Summer laughs to do His bidding, with sunlight on her face. It were a pity if God forgot our city gardens. A pity, too, if Summer played the priest, or scribe, and passed us by on the other side.

Early in May, I came to the Garden again,

after a long spell of work crowned with the feast of the Broken Body and Red Blood. "The throbbing heart of May," as Whittier has it, was beating in joy all over the Garden. "Flowery May," Milton calls her, and "Rosy May," Robert Burns.

"Rosy May comes in wi' flowers
To deck her gay, green spreading bowers."

The chill months that had been longing for Summer, as Rossetti sings, in "Love's Nocturne," had their prayer granted, at last, and clapped their chill hands for greatness of joy. And, surely, the merry month of May merits much clapping of hands even in a City Garden, especially if it come to us, as this May did, gracious, sunny, bright. By Whit-term, when men in the city were counting their gold or knitting their brows over their bills, every flower in the Garden was facing the sun, and every leaf turning itself to the light—except some laggard oaks away on the northern lawn. And, long before the end of the month, by the White Lord's Day proper, May had dressed herself in all her glory, and every shrub and tree of the Garden was hastening to bloom.

During all this month, too, the Garden was

filled with song. Every bird in the city piped its merry tune for the gladdening of life. While they mated, and nested, and brought forth their young, every singing bird sang for the love and the hope that was in them. In May and June the young birds could be seen sitting on the boughs or hopping on the ground, while impetuous fathers were chasing their mothers to nest again eager to add to the joy of life. My favourite birds, the thrush, blackbird, and linnet, were trilling out their luscious notes and thrilling the very flesh of me. Two lovely songsters alone were missing, the lark and the nightingale, but I read Shelley's "Ode to a Skylark" and Keats' "To a Nightingale," and nearly made up for the missing joy. In the "golden lightning of the sunken sun" and "darkling" I listened, and, in fancy, heard their song. And of each I cannot see what better can be said than Shelley wrote of the lark:

"Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass."

What is the chief glory of Summer, think you? To me, it is the unfolding beauty of the flowers of the trees. If Spring be the season of open wonder in the spell and charm of the little flowers of earth, the little white, pink, and pale yellow heralds of Hope, Summer is the time of amazing splendour of flowering and blossoming trees. In our City Garden, we have trees of every sort and clime; for it is a School of Forestry as well as a Nature-lover's shrine; this is one of our compensations in lieu of vast spaces. Poplars shoot their straight stems to the sky. Aspens quiver and mock in the breeze. Willows turn their white faces to the light. Maple and scyamore sing of their sunny lands. Grey birch and silver birch, our fair "Lady of the Wood," festoon in grace and winning charm on hill and lawn. Fir and pine, cedar and cypress, our dark "Lady of the Wood," tell of their northern forests and sing of their Oriental glades. Name any tree you like, you will find it here—if so be you have learned to read the leaves of the Book of God. And, in Summer, they put on not leaves only but flowers and blossom, to make beautiful with glorious illuminated work the pages of the Living Book.

'DWARF AND STANDARD ROSE'

In May and June I watched them unfold, and July found many of them still in blossom. Which to love, most, it were hard to tell. Every hawthorn in the Garden was a fairy-land of blossom, white, cream, and pink. The bloom this year was rich beyond compare. I have seen pictures of the English lanes this Summer, but they were not fairer than those of our City Garden. I have seen hawthorns bloom east and west, north and south, in bonny Scotland and the sunny South, and never have I seen anything finer than the bloom in our Garden this year. Down in the hollows, where the hawthorns mostly lie, they were lifting their incense and spreading their beauty before every passer-by. In the dark "wood," where I love to roam, there was a lovely pink that might have inspired Keats to an ode, finer far than any he ever sang. Looking at it, with him I knew the fair and joyous things of life pass not to nothingness, but increase in loveliness and keep

"A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health and quiet breathing."

On the green "hill" of the Garden that

overlooks the City, the chestnut trees were laden with blossom, chestnuts of every kind and hue and bloom. Some were lighting their giant candles, a thousand on every tree, ere May had long come. Wordsworth, Mrs Browning, and a hundred other poets sing of the "Flower-Spirits" and of the "Spirit-Aromas of blossom and bloom" that call our thoughts home "as we breathe their perfume," and, methinks, the Flower-Spirits must know our City Garden and love our chestnut trees. Early in May they lit their candles, some red, some cream, some pink washed with orange; and May and part of June they shone, a fire by night and day. And I wept, almost, when the Spirits came with the rains of June and put my candles out, the glowing perfumed candles of my much-loved chestnut trees.

Against all this glory of hawthorn and chestnut was flung the golden splendour of rich laburnum. I think I love it most of all, more than the white or pink lady of the hedge-row or the giant lord of the glade. Its fairy, golden, drooping lamps are, to my eyes, among the loveliest things God gives us on a tree. In our City Garden we have them all shades and all sorts,

some pale almost as the primrose, some sweet almost as the cowslip, some deep gold, deep as the gorse and rich as the broom. And tens of hundreds of light and deep gold laburnum lamps, all shades, all kinds, large and small, each surpassing each in loveliness, hang all over the Garden. "Dropping wells of fire," as Tennyson sings, dressed in "robes of gold," as Aubrey de Vere has it, "rich in streaming gold," as Cowper puts it, who would not love them and pipe his song in praise of the fair laburnum tree?

With them, too, and in Nature's own lovely contrast to them, we have a White Lady in our City Garden, a White Lady whom I deeply love. Dressed in purple she is queenly and fit to mate with any king. Dressed in white she is—angelic. I said I thought I loved the rich laburnum most of all, and I was not sure because I was thinking of my White Lady, the beautiful white lilac tree. When I look at her and then at the gold laburnum I am in a strait 'twixt two. Now my White Lady lays me captive, and I lift my eyes to her in love. Now the gold laburnum swings her fairy censers in my sight, and I am hers. Barnes, the Dorset poet,

has a fine little poem to my White Lady in the Dorset dialect. Cowper loved "her beauteous head," and Arthur O'Shaughnessy, the author of "Music and Moonlight" is not able to hold himself when once he spies her white robe gleaming in the sun:

"Lilacs glow, and jasmines climb,
Larks are singing the livelong day,
O, the golden summer prime!
June takes up the sceptre of May."

In sooth, who would not love my White Lady and glow at sight of her white robes gleaming in the sun?

Every tree in the Garden, methinks, has its flower, even the oak, the birch, and beech. The lime, that "summer home of murmurous wings," has its sweet fragrance too. Lights and shadows in the lime meet in exquisite disarray. Keats loved the "incense" of the lime-tree flower, and sings of it gratefully. The maple, the ash, the scyamore and walnut all have their blossom wherewith to gladden us, and our grim Scots pine, the deep yew tree, and the larch with its "rosy plumelets." The Unseen "hath made everything beautiful in his time"—even in our City Garden—and,

like one who loves His task, has made and kept a blossom of exquisite grace for last. The hazel blossom is the last of the floral sisterhood. Its yellow blossom and tender grace are the joy of many hearts. Elizabeth Whittier has a fine little poem on the "last of the floral sisterhood," though not so fair as the blossom itself:

"Through the grey and sombre wood,
Against the dusk of fir and pine,
Last of their floral sisterhood
The hazel's yellow blossoms shine,
The tawny gold of Afric's mine!"

Little wonder men and women love her.

What is true of the flowering trees is true equally, some would say more so, of our wealth of flowering shrubs. Let me name a few that gladden me in our City Garden. There is Syringa with its "ivory pure" clusters of blossom, a lovely shrub with a fair white star-like flower. If it were not for its rather strong fragrance, I would be inclined to name it with the same breath as my White Lady of the flowering trees. In contrast, there is the Tamarix with its heather-like leaves on dark brown stems breaking out into heather-like foliage early in June.

Think, too, of the Elder, neither tree nor shrub, methinks, but a pigmy in the kingdom of the sky-seekers, a giant in the realm of beauties that haunt the earth. It is here in our Garden, as in the hedgerows and gardens all round the city, a thing of beauty in blossom or berry. And what shall we say of the broom and gorse white and yellow? They are among the queens of the floral sisterhood. Of wide moors, and hillsides, and spacious places they speak to me always, and, often as I see them growing on the bank by our lily-pond my spirit takes wing and flies away, away from the crowded city to the quiet open spaces where the silence speaks of God and the soul has room to find Him. Here, in our Garden, too, is the Sienese Ligustrum, with white flower, not unlike meadow-sweet, blooming in July; the Diervilla in white, pink, and other shades, not unlike a mixture of honeysuckle and syringa; Jasmine, Japonica, and Woodbine with its fragrant honey-smell and its charm to hold the heart of man and boy. Beside these, there are the Rhododendrons with their evergreen leaves and showy flowers, too bold and vulgar for my taste, but not without power to

give the joy of a splash of colour from early January till late in June. More to my taste is the little sister of that race—Azalea, with its five lovely stamens. Our gardeners grow it thick in clumps on a hillside facing the dawn, all shades, all varieties, with marvellous and exquisite delicacy of colourings. In June, in a good year, when the sun shines and the rain has pity on us, there is no fairer sight in all the city than this hillside covered with Azalea bloom. Then, many a toiler leaves his work to come and look on it, and beholds with glad eyes what the Great Wizard can do with wonder and beauty of flowering shrubs.

Early in June, when I walked in the Garden, again, there had been a wedding with thousands of wedding guests. In the City the June brides were flocking to the altars and coming out to showers of confetti. One day, as I passed St Giles, the West Door was thick with coloured joy. But, there is nothing like the confetti of Nature. In the Garden, hundreds of wedding guests had thrown it thick and far, from every flowering shrub and tree, on every lawn. One lawn, in the hollow of the Garden, was snow-white with blossoms from the fruit-trees. On

the brown earth, under the hawthorns, pink and white confetti made a sight fit for the angels—all pink under some, white under others, white and pink mixed under others again, tossed by the laughing wind. Even the giant chestnuts had joined in the wedding frolic, and a great shower of rich pink blooms lay under a fine tree at the back of the Herbarium. I do not know who was the bride: methinks it must have been one of the Spirits of the Garden: but my White Lady of the flowering trees was chief bridesmaid, and Lady Syringa, with her "ivory pure" hands and star-like face, carried the bride's train. Later on, in July, there were other weddings, when the rose trees, and the broom, and the white lilac, and the ivory pure Syringa all cast their blossom at the feet of the brides, but, in the Garden as in the City, the chief wedding is in June, and the confetti of June eclipses in splendour the coloured joy of any other month of the year.

Later in June, when I came yet again, and chanced on an hour of sunshine, one of the few sunny hours of a wet June, three things pressed themselves home. We think of the radiance of Summer, but seldom of her darkened vision

and of her imprisonments. In Spring, Autumn, and Winter it is light; in Summer it is twilight. When the leaves are full out, and the trees are laden with flowers, the vision is shortened and the Garden darkened. We cannot see through or under the trees, while, beneath them, we walk in darkness. Summer makes many rooms and locks us in: and it is twilight under her weight of leaves. Autumn unlocks the doors and Winter sets the prisoners free. In Summer, I can see a little way only on our lawns: in Winter, I can see all over the Garden almost. In Summer, however bright the sky, it is dark under the trees: in Winter it is light. That is the first thing that pressed itself home.

The second is this, a wonderful thing in its way and a subtle hint of the marvellous interlacings of the seasons and the indivisibility of the year. Autumn steals into the days of Summer and lays her tinted hands on leaf and flower ere June has sped. Early in June, the barberry leaves were beginning to turn. By mid-summer day they were crimson with the glory of Autumn. In July the maples were lifting their wine-coloured leaves to drink to the coming splendour. Long ere Summer had gone, my White

Lady of the lilac tree was yellow with age, withered and shrunk, like a white angel grown old, while my purple maid was like a ruined queen, and my rich laburnums had spent their gold like a crowd of prodigals. Most of the rhododendrons, too, had bade good-bye to Summer, though, with them, a fair thing happens. After their bloom is over their fresh green leaves appear, redeeming the waste and prophesying glory to come. They die and pay toll with their flowers to Summer; then rise again, and put on their new leaves, and have their Spring before Autumn has come. That is the second thing that pressed its way home.

The third you will have guessed by now. It is a lovely thing, a beautiful parable, a poem written of God, whose every line is a note of joy, and all together rich in deep suggestion, or, as Carlyle would have it, "significant of much." Early in June and late, I saw the new green leaves with the old brown on the sweet bay trees. I saw the new green leaves with the dark on the firs and pines. I saw them on the Indian cedars with their great spreading branches. Every dark leaf was tipped with fresh green. I know of few more joyous sights, more signific-

ant or suggestive, than the spruce and larch, the fir and cedar trees tipped with fresh green leaves, old and young together, Youth kissing the face of Age, Hope nestling in the folds of Death, Life smiling on the Doomed. I marked the confetti on the ground, and saw my White Lady wither and the gold of Laburnum fade, and knew that Summer was past for them and many of the floral sisterhood, but I mark, too, the green leaves on cedar, fir, and pine, and hear the "still small voice" of Life and Hope, and know that all is well.

In our City Garden, also, I would have you know we have a "Rosary"—not of beads but of flowers—"the queen of flowers," a glorious acre of roses of every kind, as well as roses here, there, and everywhere, all over the Garden. Ever since the time of Sappho and Cleopatra men and women have loved them and poets sung of them. One thing, however, I cannot make out, why no great poet has ever sung a song of the first rose of Summer. You know the thrill it gives, the smile it spreads on the face, the care it lifts from the brow. I wish some poet would dip his pen in the blush of a Summer's morn and write us a song of the First Rose

of Summer. We have heard too much of the "Last Rose": it has got on our nerves; we need a song of cheer. This year, early in June, I saw my first wild rose, a blood-stained petal that had kissed the dawn, and, a little later, my first climbing rose against the southern wall of the western lodge, a lovely bloom, cream touched with yellow. All during June they kept coming all over the Garden, a glorious company of praising apostles, singing for joy, single and full, wild and cultured, every hue and colour under the sun.

In July, in our northern City, the roses are at their best, though poets sing of the "rosy month of June." Last Summer, June and July, they were the joy of the whole Garden. This year, our June rains have washed and stained them badly, though July has made some recompense. Roses love pure air, and are difficult to grow in some cities, though they do well with us. They love sunshine even more, and when we have a good summer, what with luxuriance of bloom and sweetness of fragrance they gladden the life for many a day.

Dwarf and standard rose, rambler and climber, we have them all here, from the wild

Scots brier, old Provence, Gallic, and Moss roses to the latest venture in the kingdom of sunshine. I love them all, and where all are beautiful would find it hard to make a choice. But, if some White Angel were to come and lift me out of the toil of our City streets and give me the joy of a country garden, I think I should choose these: Lady Roberts, a tea scented rose; the Alba Celestial, with its sweet fragrance, suitable for growing as a bush or a hedge; the hybrid perpetual Frau Karl, a lovely white flower even when in full bloom; and of hybrid tea roses the following: the Warrior, a deep red; Charles J. Graham, red; Kaiserin Augusta Victoria, cream; Liberty, red; Gloire Lyonnaise, cream; Le Progres, pale yellow; Madame Melaine Soupert, pale yellow; Prince de Bulgarie; President Carnot; White Killarney; La France, flesh-coloured pink; Madame Jean Sisley, a most lovely art shade of pink; Lady Ashton, pink; Madame A. Chatenay, pink; Souvenir de Catherine Guillot, a fair blush rose; Souvenir de Pierre Notting, pale yellow; Homer, pale pink; Maman Cochet; Viscountess Folkestone; Anna Ollivier, a lovely scented rose; Helene Welter, and Caroline

Testout, a lovely large pink. Give me, too, the Gloire de Dijon and Marshal Ney; the Polyantha rose, Leonie Lamerck; of the Bourbons four, the Princess Imperial Victoria, white; Madame Pierre Oger, blush faintly showing through white; Charles Lefeuvre, red; Madame Alfred Carriere, a lovely cream; and of the Wichuriana hybrids seven, René André, blush; Ferdinand Roussel, blush; Edmond Proust, blush; La Perle, a lovely cream; Paul Transon, cream; Alberic Barbier, cream; and Francois Poisson, cream also. This is, by no means, a full list, but only a few that specially call to me. It could be enlarged a hundred fold: but my pleasure is in the flower, and not in names. Add to these, however, two single roses, the Indian Rosa Sericea with its tiny leaves and lovely pale yellow blooms, and the Scots Burnet rose, equally fair.

The attachment of the nightingale to the rose is a well-known Persian fable, but, alas, we have no nightingales in our City Garden. The attachment of the poets to the rose is, also, well-known, and their music haunts our City Gardens as well as country places. Though they have not written of the first rose of Sum-

mer, they have touched their lyres often in praise of the roses. Dante gives to the seat of the blessed the shape of a rose, inside which he shows to us a crowd of angels with golden wings ascending and descending. The rose, too, played a great part in Pagan story. Sappho calls it rightly "the grace of the earth," and Keats sings of it as "the sweetest flower wild Nature yields." Drummond of Hawthornden has a fine poem on how the rose got its colour and fragrance—a pretty story which you must read for yourselves. Byron, Leigh Hunt, Tennyson, Hood, and many other moderns drink of its beauty and sing of its fragrance.

"Whatsoe'er of beauty
Yearns and yet reposes,
Blush and bosom and sweet breath,
Took a shape in roses."

The quaintest of all rose songs, however, is that Old Song of the Rose, handed down through many a hundred years, from the heart of a nameless singer:

"There is no rose of swich vertu
As is the Rose that bare Jhesu.
Alleluia.
For in this Rose conteined was

Hevene and erthe in litel space,
Res miranda.
Be that Rose we may weel see
There be o* God in persones three,
Pares forma.
The aungeles sungen the schepherdes to,
Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Gaudeamus.
Leve we all werdly merthe
And folowe we this joyful herthe.
Transeamus.

These joyous things I remembered in June as I walked in our City Garden, and called to mind, too, some of the sadder thoughts of the roses. In the catacombs of Rome, on the sepulchres of their dead, our martyrs and confessors, the early Christians, laid a garland of roses. At Pentecost, however, roses were thrown with joy from the roofs of the churches on the heads of the worshippers below. Omar Khayyam loved them well in life, and prayed that they might be with him in death, a prayer kind Nature granted. A friend who visited the Persian grave found the roses growing by the side of the wall and rose-leaves falling on the poet's dust. W. E.

* One.

"WHOSE FLAMES OF HONEYSUCKLE AND WILD ROSE WERE
HANGING IN THE BREEZE"

Henley, in a fine poem, asks that the fragrance of the flower might meet and mix and waver through the dream of his "sleeping" lady. And dear old Samuel Johnson, when he turned his face to the dark, sang,

"Lay me where o'er the verdant ground
Her living carpet Nature spreads,
Where the green bower with roses crowned
In showers its fragrant foliage sheds."

A much-sung flower the rose is worthy of our love. In our City Garden its fragrance, caught by the wind and wafted toward us, is, like the vintage of sweet briar in Spring, a draught fit for the whitest soul on earth.

In the evening of Midsummer Day I walked through the Garden again. I wanted to see the tide turn and hear the cry of another Summer high up on the shingles of Time. The day had been broken and the evening wore to dark with leaden clouds. But the virgin lamps of scent and "dew" were swinging in the breeze, though in the spinney it was sheltered and still. The fragrance that the flowers gave to the breeze was wafted to me, and the song of the thrush in the growing dark. In the "wood" or spinney, so dark was it and still, one could easily fancy

oneself in possession of vast spaces and far from the City's madding throng. By the "lake" in the hollow it was quiet, too; looking into its depths I could see in fancy the eyes of the Blessed Damozel "deeper than the depth of water stilled at even." On the "hill," the breeze was rising and falling, like a tired child ready to sleep and waiting for the sheltering dark. The smoke of the City was passing eastward toward Arthur's Seat crouching in the gloom, while, far away to the south, in the falling night, the Pentlands could be seen, standing erect, guarding the City of our Love. Dark, growing dark, it was, far and near. The lamps of the streets were lit and the great City was wending its way to sleep. The toil of day was over; the healing night had come; and the hush that Nature keeps for the weary was lapping men to rest. I turned, and, lo, a star. And, as I looked, an angel touched me, and there rose from the Garden the prayer of a great singer's last sonnet: "Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou

art—

Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,

The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores." *

Then knew I what it is to hear the voice of God speaking in the Garden, knew, too, a star may ring a soul to prayer, and fragrance of flowers lift the incense of life upward, in the Temple not made with hands.

It was three weeks, or more, before I came to the Garden again. The spinney drew me, and I wandered within its shelter full half an hour. Here were violas, ragged robins, and clumps of blue-bells under a score of brown Scots firs. Here, too, were ferns of many kinds such as I love and try to grow in my own little garden. Here, also, saxifraga with large daisy-like leaves and frail sprays of tiny blossom on long brown stems grew beside aquilegia of all shades. Wild geraniums there were in abundance, and a clump of pale yellow primula in sweet contrast to a host of big showy pæonias. The lily of the valley was still in bloom, and Livingstone's cream white pyrethrum, and the fair pink chrysanthemum Andromeda. Here and there were patches of buttercups, remind-

* From John Keats' Last Sonnet.

ing one of the cloth of gold, their "matchless sheen," as Jean Ingelow puts it, shining like "drops of gold among the green."

Out in the open Garden a few flowers took my eye: the Iris germanica, Queen of Mary, with its variegated purple blooms; the pale pink Dianthus with its olive grasslike stem and pleasant fragrance; poppies of all sorts, Oriental and Iceland; violas and pansies of many kinds, in rich and fragrant abundance. Down by the pond meadow-sweet was in bloom, fragrant in the sun, sweet in truth. By it grew clumps of white epilobium, a plant with clusters of white flowers fairer and paler than syringa, with pale green leaves between the flowers. The bees were in it gathering honey while it sucked its life from the "lake." Over in the great herbaceous border there was a lovely show of flowers of all sorts all July. Every herbaceous plant in the sun must be here, methinks; a joyous, brilliant company they are, I cannot name half of them, and would not if I could. The old familiar faces draw me, and the loves of long ago come out to meet me: Sweet Peas, all kinds and shades, in patches here and there; Marguerites, white

and yellow; climbing roses of every variety and colour; phlox, in every hue; sunflowers, from east and west; thistles, garden varieties, fine and flourishing; chrysanthemums of all sorts, one ragged Robinsoni specially pleasing me; erigeron, a ragged mauve flower with bronze heart; hemerocallis baroni with pale, tapered, golden lily blooms; zinnia, in lovely clumps, all colours; dianthus, Lady Dixon, Mrs Sinkins, and others; lobelia, cardinalis and many other sorts; tagetes, lilies and dahlias.

To most men flowers are among the most beautiful things in the world. To most men, also, they lift up their frail beauty and speak deep thoughts. Not Wordsworth alone, but many a nameless toiler in the dark can truly say,

"Thanks to the human heart by which we
live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for
tears."

To our poets, however, they make special appeal, mystical, joyous, inspirational. To every singer worth the name they are not flowers

only but little ambassadors of hope and joy or singers of love and gladness. Russell Lowell puts it thus:

"Flowers are not flowers unto the poet's eyes,
Their beauty thrills him by an inward sense;
He knows that outwards seemings are but lies,
Or, at the most, but earthly shadows, whence
The soul that looks within for truth may guess
The presence of some wondrous heavenliness."

To Dante Rossetti the honeysuckle are "virgin lamps of scent and dew." To W. E. Henley gilliflowers are "like praising souls" and lilies, "lamps of light." To Mrs Hinkson "little censers of pale gold are the lilies" that the wind, sweet and sunny, sets aswing. To earlier poets they make the same appeal, and life is enriched for us not only by the beauty of the flowers but by the countless beautiful things our poets write of them. Ancient and modern they sing of their beauty, their fragrance, their hues, their seasons, their evanescence, their message, and they weave round them fairy stories frail as gossamer and myths deep as Homer. They give them names, and take them to their hearts like human friends, and tell us their sweet sec-

rets in their songs. Shakespeare, Spencer, Milton, Cowper, Shelley, Keats, Burns, Rossetti, Longfellow, Emerson, Browning, Tennyson, Swinburne, Stevenson, all sing of them, each beating out his music with joy when he holds in his hand a lily or his eyes are holden of a field of flowers.

Their beauty is "a joy for ever." Their fragrance is like music that comes

"O'er my ear like the sweet south
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour."

"What were the world if it should lose their hue?" cries a modern, feeling for music and moonlight among the "tender-tinted wood flowers." Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, every month and every flower has its song; as for example O. W. Holmes:

"When wake the violets, Winter dies:
When sprout the elm-buds, Spring is near;
When lilacs blossom, Summer cries,
'Bud, little roses! Spring is here!'"

Their evanescence, too, is much on the heart of the poets, from Omar Khayyam to Christina Rossetti. Herrick's famous "Gather ye Rosebuds while ye may" and Moore's "Last

Rose of Summer" have entered the life of the race, and Omar but gives them his Oriental touch,

"Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That youth's sweet scented manuscript
should close!
The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah, whence, and whither flown who knows?"

The inspiration and teaching of the flowers, and the message that their fragrance bears on the wind, have been the burden of many a song and many a "scented" sermon. I counted three score and ten of them in one book the other day. For city dwellers, stained with the toil and traffic of the town, I know of none better than these by two modern singers, hemispheres asunder. This, by Christina Rossetti,

"Consider
The lilies that do neither spin nor toil,
Yet are most fair:—
What profits all this care
And all this coil?"

And this, by Bliss Carman,

"Over the shoulders and slopes of the dune
I saw the white daisies go down to the sea,
A host in the sunshine, an army in June,

The people God sends us to set our heart free.

The bobolinks rallied them up from the dell,
The orioles whistled them out of the wood,
And all of their saying was, 'Earth, it is well!'
And all of their dancing was, 'Life, thou art good!'"

When next I came to the Garden it was the last day of summer. June and July had been more than wet, but the last day was flooded with sunshine and Summer went out in joy. Even as I should like, she met the dark with a smile upon her face. Till the last hour of our Summer's day the sun shone, and passed, for another year, in quietness and strength. In the Garden, the white leaves of the willows were shining in the breeze, and every lawn and walk, every tree, shrub, and bloom were bathed in the golden light of the setting sun. Bees were busy among the flowers and floral shrubs all over the Garden, as if they knew as well as Mrs Hinkson that,

"There's honey in the leaf and the blossom,
And honey in the night and the day."

Two lovers walked on the hill, arm in arm, speaking their honeyed words, busy as the

bees, honey-sweet the heart in love's bosom and honey-sweet the words love will say. The sweet briar was still sweet and the roses in the Garden, though their first loveliness and fragrance had gone. The lawns were laden with the scent of mown grass and the mowers were still at work making the best of a sunny day. The birds were silent, save for the twitter of the sparrows and an occasional song from the thrush: they knew that Summer was dying, going out to meet the night. The dahlias were lifting their flaming heads, as if exulting: they are not children of Summer but of Autumn the dahlias, and they were eager to meet their day. Many a Summer flower had gone, withered of the wind, mown by the rain. The blooms in the Rose Garden were blighted and stained, and the ground was covered with rose-leaves of every hue, white, pink, cream, red, yellow, all over the Garden. Only the hardiest and strongest were left to bask in the sunlight of the last day, and to behold Summer go out with the light. All over the Garden, too, the leaves of trees were on the ground. In Mid-July I marked the sycamore shedding its glory, and every day saw others follow. To-night, they were thick on the

paths, and rustled at my feet, as I walked in the setting sun and waited to see Summer die.

'Tis but July and leaves are on the ground;
Grey sunless noons and heaven's dark, beating rain
Have borne them to earth, struggling in vain
Against a deluge. Heap'd here is a mound
Of wither'd leaves in premature doom wound
Round the feet of Summer, the dunnet train
Of Autumn come to bury her, ere gain
Of Spring has spent itself or gold been found.
Ah me! when Autumn comes ere Summer's sun
Has burnt out o' the soul, ere its span's run;
When sodden leaves of Death rustle 'mid life;
And 'stead of crimson, gold, and lavish store
Of Autumn-splendour, Age knocks at the door
And Youth is buried ere's begun the strife?

"Good-bye Summer, Good-bye Hope," do you cry? No, not so! All the to-morrows shall not be as to-day. Last year, Summer was glorious. Next year, it may be brighter still.

TO AUTUMN

"Season of mist and mellow fruitfulness!
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'erbrimm'd their clammy cells.

. . . . . .

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue."

KEATS

AUTUMN BY J. R. AITKEN

OF ALL MONTHS IN THE YEAR, let me not spend August in town. Everybody who is anybody is away, and this fair Athens of the North becomes a City of brown paper. Every house in the west-end is closed, and the brown papered windows speak to you of hills and moors, lochs and streams, where the happy dwellers are. To mock you further, some of the owners put up papers telling you where you will find them, in some lovely nook or glen far from the madding crowd. To remain in town is to be taunted at every turn. Tragedy, too, lies on the trees of our City streets in August. The glory of Summer is past, the wonder of Autumn not yet come. Shrivelled and dusty, tragic as the reams of brown paper, are the leaves of our City streets.

In our Royal Garden, however, it is different. Here, it is possible to see some of the wealth of Autumn and know that she has her "music" too. The Jews, with a deeper spiritual understanding of the seasons than we, ended their year with the Autumn-glory. They began with Winter, when Nature is asleep; watched her wake in Spring, and put on her beautiful garments; laughed to see her pass to Summer,

in fragrant glorious ascending scale; and sang their psalms of deepest joy when every orchard was laden with fruit and every field gave forth its gold. Even in a City Garden, one can see that this is right and Autumn is the climax of the year. Each season has its glory, its own peculiar joy, and may not be pitted wisely one against the other. Winter has her white snow and lonely naked splendour. Spring has her little flowers, white, pink, palest yellow. Summer has her gayer children, lilies and roses kissing the sun. And Autumn is an Oriental maid who loves earth's richest colours, and has her gold and crimson, crimson and gold, every hour of the day.

Tennyson in some charming verses sings of the generosity of Nature in country and town.

"Unwatched the garden bough shall sway,
The tender blossom flutter down,
Unloved that beech will gather brown,
This maple burn itself away;

Unloved, the sunflower shining fair
Ray round with flames her disk of seed,
And many a rose-carnation feed
With summer spice the humming air."

'HEAVILY HANG THE TIGER LILIES'

AUTUMN IN A CITY GARDEN

In our City Garden, Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, the Great Mother walks her wizard-way, unwatched, unloved by the crowd but not unloved and not unwatched by me. All through August I watched her in the Garden, my compensation for the month in town. In September I got my breath of country air; and the beeches of the Garden gathered brown, the maples burned themselves away, the sunflowers "shining fair" rayed round with flames their disks of seed, "unwatched" but not unloved. In October, I returned to find the splendour over but marks of the Wizard's hand at every turn.

Our great herbaceous border comes to its own in Autumn, and gladdens every eye. Beautiful in Summer and always holding some surprise, it is a glowing mass of colour in Autumn and is out for the gladdening of the world. We have no great beds of colour here, such as they affect in rich men's gardens, and no lavish massing of flowers or subtle blending of colour and background, but we have almost every flower and shade under the sun, and all in fair profusion. Let me name a few, seen in our herbaceous border the Autumn

through, common enough to be sure, and found in every country garden, yet, for that very reason, loved the more when found in a City Garden.

Here we have Begonias making a fine show of colour, and Geraniums running them hard for the honours of the Garden. Dahlias, Cactus and other, flame in the sun, and tall white Michaelmas Daisies stand up and praise the King. China Asters make a brave show and speak their deep thoughts to every waiting spirit. Emerson, a quiet, waiting spirit, heard them. Sings he:

"Chide me not, laborious band,
For the idle flowers I brought;
Every aster in my hand
Goes home laden with a thought."

Larkspur is here, too, and clumps of Sweet Peas all along the border. Their lovely hues, their frail and fair flowers, their soaring ambitions, and their clinging tendrils, always suggest to me beautiful thoughts. Few fairer parables under the sun are written than the parable of the Sweet Pea. Hood coarsely calls her "A wanton witch in too much haste to wed," and sings of her clasping "her rings on every

hand." Keats gets nearer the truth when he writes:

"Here are Sweet Peas, on tiptoe for a flight;
With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white,
And taper fingers catching at all things,
To bind them all about with tiny rings."

Heavily hang the hollyhocks all along the border, and heavily hang the tiger lilies. All other kinds of lilies are here. The Golden Lily (Lilium Auratum) towers over all, and the African Lily (Agapanthus umbellatum) keeps it goodly company. The Madonna Lily stands like a white angel in the Garden and speaks of Our Lady's purity and grace. The radiant white of its flowers and the shining beauty of its buds are counsels of love when one has sinned. To see them is to meet Innocence again and Christ-bearing hope. No wonder our poets have sung of the lilies, from Matthew Prior through all the glorious company to the poets of to-day. Sings Katherine Tynan Hinkson, a charming modern:

"Honey-Sweet, sweet as honey smell the lilies,
Little lilies of the gold in a ring;
Little censers of pale gold are the lilies,
That the wind, sweet and sunny, sets aswing."

"Ye ardent marigolds" and "honied heliotrope"

flame in the Garden and touch with sweetness the cheeks of the passers-by. Hydrangea and Gladioli, Nasturtiums and Lobelia, light up the Border with their varied colours. The dark brown pointed leaves and vivid scarlet blooms of Lobelia cardinalis and the dark plum-coloured foliage of her still more handsome sister, Lobelia fulgens, were a glorious sight all through the Autumn. Garlands of Clematis and carpets of Cyclamen might have been gathered and lifted in Border and Wood.

In the Wood, too, in Autumn, there is much to make one sing. Cyclamen Neapolitanum with its tiny pure white flower is like a child of Spring born in Autumn, and is fair enough to make our sweetest song. Autumn Crocus, Anemone Japonica, and Erigeron, all make a lovely show in the depths of the wood, while charming effects are painted at every turn by Campanulas, Everlasting Peas, Shirley Poppies, Foxgloves, and Evening Primroses. There are days when I wander in the wood, in Autumn and Spring, and feel that Nature laughs in her pride at the boasted culture of the Gardener.

What lovely, frail, entrancing creatures are the children of the woods: to know them, one by one, and love them truly, is to find a well of water "springing up unto life eternal."

Though in thought we link the rose with Summer, late-flowering Autumn-Roses there are in plenty, and these to me are the joy of our City Garden. In addition to the second blooms of Autumn, we have many that bloom only in the fall. Each year adds to the triumph of the Gardener here, and no flower, perhaps, will more repay his skill than Summer or Autumn roses. Teas and hybrid Teas, especially, make a glorious show in the Garden. Teas such as Souv. de Catherine Guillot, her darker friend Souv. de J. B. Guillot, Baronne de Hoffman, and Amabalis, with their red and pink blooms, are a perpetual joy, while among the yellow, orange, and flesh-coloured kinds that flower in Autumn give me Marie van Houte, Anna Olivier, Kaiserin Augusta Victoria, Gustave Regis, Dr Grill, Enchantress, and a host of others. China roses, too, there are blooming in Autumn in the Garden, the lovely old pink roses of our childhood and the fair fore-runners of countless beautiful children.

One other Autumn flower must I name, one of the fairest, methinks, that the world holds, next to the rose the most admired of Autumn, that glorious gift of the East, the Chrysanthemum. White and pink, orange-brown and orange-gold, warm yellow and pale saffron, deep crimson and terra cotta, and all the lovely colours of the sun, burn and glow, flash and flame, in the Chrysanthemums of our Garden. We have no show varieties in the open, but we have almost every type that can be grown there. All Autumn through, in marvellous succession, in wonderful beauty, they come to us, and kiss our eyes with joy; and all Autumn through we fling our kisses to the East in thanksgiving for such a flower. Loved, and destined to be loved yet more, it is strong and well-suited for any City Garden. Late into the Autumn they flower, and yield only to the white imperious onslaught of Winter. Fair as they are useful, and varied as they are beautiful, little wonder our poets have begun to sing the glories of Chrysanthemum. Walking among them in the Garden, I remembered Addington Symonds' fine sonnet "To Chrysanthemums," and felt that his praise was due.

"Late comers, ye, when Autumn's wealth is past,
When pale October strips the yellowing leaves;
When on our garden lawns and dripping eaves
The rain-soaked foliage of the elm is cast;
When 'neath grey skies the wild Atlantic blast
Searches the flower-bed for each bloom that cleaves
To blackening tendrils; when November weaves
Fretwork of frost, and Winter frowns at last;
Ye, in the year's decay and death of hope,
Dawn with your hues auroral, hues of rose,
Saffron and ivory, amber, amethyst;
More delicate, more dear, more true than those
Gay blossoms which the July sunbeams kissed,
Purer of scent than honied heliotrope."

If in the springtime one is inclined to sing with Aubrey de Vere, "O the flower of the tree is the flower for me," the glorious wealth of Autumn-leaves compel one to speak of them

in "Love's language" and "work out choicest sentences" in their praise. Early in August the maples of the Garden had began to show their wine-tipped leaves, and during September must have been a picture of wine-red splendour. In the Highlands, all September, I saw them, in many a glen, on many a roadside, on many a hill, flaming heralds of Autumn. There, too, I saw the chestnut turn to fire, and the mountain-ash flame to crimson, and the silver birch change to lightest gold, and the beech trees put on their wealth of brown, and the brambles pass to crimson and gold, gold and crimson, on every mountain side. One mountain-ash in the Pass of Killiecrankie has burnt itself deep into the convolutions of memory, and a maple on the hillside on the way down to Loch Tay from Aberfeldy has become one of life's "great possessions." In the Garden, we have every one of these trees speaking the glory of Autumn, and I have seen them, year after year, put on their wealth of colour to gladden the eye of one city-dweller. In magnificence, splendour, lavish variety, and marvellous wealth of colour, there is nothing in Nature to compare with the changing of the leaves in Autumn,

nothing except it be that "autumn" of the day which men call sunset. Once a year, for a month or so at longest, the angels of the Orient pass through the Garden and call forth an oriental wealth of colour. Every tree in the Garden, every shrub in the land, feels the touch of their golden wings, and turns to splendour. The wild cherries, and pear trees, and crab apples, on the lawns, may not be left unkissed and join in the "sunset" of Nature. The rose tree, japonica, Virginia creeper, ampelopsis, berberis, snowberry, staghorned sumach, and many others, put on their "beautiful garments." Let me die like nature dies, burn out like the maple and the chestnut tree, turn to gold and crimson like the silver-birch and the mountain-ash, put on the glory of a single rose leaf, and fall, as they fall, into the arms of Love, and all will be well. It were magnificent to die as a bramble dies, with fruit on every "bough" and crimson and gold on every "leaf" of this little life of ours.

I have never been able to make out why men weep for the falling leaves. The melancholy of the poets has fallen on the crowd; and every one thinks it right to shed a tear when Nature sheds her "beautiful garments." They fall in

town earlier than in the country; when I returned in October, most of our Garden trees were bare. Only a few leaves clung to them, afraid to let go; all the rest had fallen, unafraid and unashamed. "Dead," they were serving the Highest, as well as "living." Turning to dust, they were glorifying Life and the Life-Giver, as well as turning to crimson and gold. Weep for the falling leaves? No. I pick one up in my Garden, and I whisper, "Thou hast thy music too." A wedding it is, not a funeral.

The Wedding

Some would weep for the leaves as they sweep
To the earth at their fall,
The silence of still October breaking
With funeral tread;
I would sing of them rather as gifts,
Golden and russet all,
Flung at our feet, in love, Autumn
And Winter to wed.

High, 'mong the trees of the forest and
The smoke of city lawn,
Weaving their garlands, golden and russet,
And smiling, not sad,

AUTUMN IN A CITY GARDEN

I see the angels of Nature busy, by night
And at dawn
A-flinging their wealth on the bride,
God's world to make glad.

My feet are among the rustling leaves, but my heart is singing with the bride.

WINTER

I, singularly moved
To love the lovely that are not beloved,
Of all the seasons, most
Love Winter, and to trace
The sense of the Trophonian pallor on her face.
It is not death, but plenitude of peace;
And the dim cloud that doth the world enfold
Hath less the character of dark and cold,
Than warmth and light asleep;
And correspondent breathing seems to keep
With the infant harvest, breathing soft below
Its eider coverlet of snow.
Nor is in field, or garden anything
But duly looked into, contains serene
The substance of things hoped for in the Spring,
And evidence of Summer, not yet seen.

COVENTRY PATMORE

MY LOVE FOR THE GARDEN is like Hood's for his "dearest lady." It lives not within the humour of the eye, as if the Rose made Summer and Summer made the year, but "takes new lustre from the touch of time." Every true love, whether it be the love of one's "dearest lady," or love of our Great Mother, Nature, is its own great loveliness alway:

"Its bough owns no December and no May,
But bears its blossom into winter's clime."

The "blossom" of Winter is visible even to the seeing eye, and its marvellous loveliness transfigures even our City Gardens. Though flowers are few and frosts bite hard, the Great Mother does not fail to give to Winter a beauty all its own. Not the beauty of Summer, of course, or of Spring, or Autumn, but a loveliness which "takes new lustre from the touch of time." Flowers are not the whole of Life's expectations, or singing birds, or flaming trees. Each season has its own possessions and makes its own contribution to the joy of life. "At Christmas," as Shakespeare sang long ago:

"At Christmas I no more desire a rose,

Than wish a snow in May's new-fangled shows,
But like of each thing that in season grows."

To me, the "dearest lady" of all our City's glory is the Royal Garden of which I write. It is not only fair, but it holds healing, and joy, and inspiration—even in "winter's clime." Not vast, by any means, its fifty odd acres bear the touch of the Wizard's hand and reveal the glory of the Great Mother, even in the dead of the year. Time and again have I walked its green lawns, and, never once has she disappointed me.

The first time this winter was early in November. The day was fine and the golden light of noon was lying on the trees. The leaves of Autumn for the most part had gone, and the spaciousness of Winter had come. The red beech leaves were clinging to the trees, and the yellow shrivelled leaves of the oak were holding on still. Here and there, throughout the Garden, were other trees that dress in Summer only with a few leaves upon them, single leaves or isolated clusters, like Spring, Summer, and Autumn holding on to the skirts

'THAT GLORIOUS GIFT OF THE EAST,
THE CHRYSANTHEMUM'

of Winter, clinging like beggarly suppliants, afraid to let go. A few roses, too, were left in the Garden long after the last day of Summer, with buds on them even now that would ripen indoors if tenderly tended. A bed of red, red roses, though not "newly blown," were in full bloom, far from the sunny month of June, a gift of Summer for the breast of Winter.

Toward the end of November, I came again. It had been a mild open month so far, and the day ended with one of the fairest sunsets I have ever seen. A bank of low clouds in the west, deep and wide, resting on the very ground and casting a deep shadow on the earth. Above this bank of clouds the gold of the setting sun, spread all over the western sky, passing through many shades of colour, higher and higher, till it reached a blushing crimson. Above all this, in turn, was a great expanse of blue, right over the sky, from east to west, north to south. And, in the blue of the darkening heaven, one evening star. In the Garden it was framed in fitting setting, and as seen from the hill, became one of life's radiant visions. Starlight and sunset rise and fade not in vain but burn themselves into the wealth of Memory.

Beautiful at all times, if you wish to see the loveliness of trees in winter, the naked leafless trees, see them in the glow of such a sunset, or in the gold of an early Winter morning, or when the hoar has spread its magic on trunk and stem, or when the snow lies on every branch and clothes every Lady of the Wood in richest ermine. Laurence Binyon in his masterly book on Chinese Art shows us the ancient Chinese love of perspective and their most delicate tracery, but the tracery of trunk and branch, seen in such an atmosphere, outrivals every Art. Against the glory of that November sunset in our City Garden, I traced the marvellous beauty of form, of trunk and branch, of that fair Lady of the Wood the silver birch, even in winter "a thing of beauty" and "a joy for ever." Against it, too, I saw the weightier glory of the oak and elm, with their heavier trunks and twisted gnarled branches. And an old Scots pine that grows between an ancient oak and hollow elm, on the slope of the hill, was transformed in the evening light. I tell you, pick your day and hour, and come to the Garden, and look on its Winter "nakedness," gaunt trunks and bare

branches, and you will see beauty such as Summer cannot boast, a beauty that is Winter's very own.

It is good to hear a voice singing in the dark and good to hear a soul making the best even of Winter. When days are short and Winter grips, it cheers and gladdens us to catch the music of some brave singer. So I remember that a few poets have been brave enough to tune their lyres to winter-songs, and have beaten out the gladness of its great possessions. It takes an able-bodied man to sing of Winter, and able-bodied poets, ancient and modern, have seen its glory. Any poet can sing of Spring when all the earth is breaking into bud and every bird is singing in the land: we could even spare a few Spring poets. Any man can take his pipe and chant the splendour of "Midsummer Pomps" when every flower is in bloom and the air is laden with fragrance of roses. Not Keats alone, but meaner bards in scores can write us "Odes to Autumn," the "season of mists and mellow-fruitfulness," the "close bosom-friend of the maturing sun." But, when Winter comes, and snow lies on the ground, and nights are dark and long, their

stream of song is frozen to its fount, and only a few brave souls are left to sing a song of Winter.

Of old Scottish poets, Robert Henryson, Gavin Douglas, and Sir David Lyndsay write of Winter as if they loved it, and of modern poets William Cowper, George Macdonald, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Coventry Patmore have each a song to sing in Winter's glory. The older men seem to love it for its own sake and for the pleasures that it brings: they were hard seasoned fellows who took Nature as they found her and turned her coldest days to song. The modern men love it for its own sake, it is true, but seem to love it more for the vision that it gives of coming Spring: however fair it may be to them and however pleasant its days, it is to them a White Mount from which to view the coming glory. So Cowper, in his "Winter Walk At Noon," writes:

"It sleeps; and the icy touch
Of unprolific winter has impressed
A cold stagnation on the intestine tide.
But let the months go round, a few short months,
And all shall be restored. These naked shoots
Barren as lances, among which the wind
Makes wintry music, sighing as it goes,

Shall put their graceful foliage on again,
And more aspiring, and with ampler spread,
Shall boast new charms, and more than they
have lost."

The same radiant vision comes to George Macdonald and Whittier. As I walk the Garden and read his "Wild Flowers," I wonder when George Macdonald is coming to his own. He has been denied his kingdom over-long. His poems are among the finest, bravest, sanest, Scotland has produced for many a day. I wish I could quote his "Wild Flowers" in my little Garden Book, for it has much of the real stuff called poetry. Its thought, too, is deep and suggestive, and its hopefulness bracing as a breath of Spring. The wasted flowers and the seeming death of winter are made to contribute to the endless hope. In dying they shall pass to something better, burning upwards in the fire of Nature's ceaseless sacrifice.

"Pass and find yourselves at home
Where but life can go and come,
Where all life is in its nest,
Loving One with holy zest,
(Who knows?) with shadowy, dawning sense
Of the past, age-long somnolence!"

Whittier's mind is simpler and less mystical than George Macdonald's, less poetical too, I think, but to him, also, comes the vision of the beauty of Winter. Winter is no slave-master, and he feels he may sing in the midst of its rigours. Not to be mourned or shunned, not to be hated or despised, not to be lightly praised when fuller notes are kept for Spring, Whittier hears Winter calling for a song, and sings its praise in verse as simple as it is true.

"Fair seem these Winter days, and soon
Shall blow the warm west winds of Spring,
To set the unbound rills in tune,
And hither urge the blue-bird's wing;
The vales shall laugh in flow'rs, the woods
Grow misty green with leafing buds,
And violets and wind-flowers sway
Against the throbbing heart of May."

This vision of Spring in the midst of Winter is a joyous thing to carry before the eyes through Winter's darkest days. But, indeed, Spring is nearer to us in Winter than we often think. One day in December, the twelfth, I heard a thrush trying its first notes in a blaze of sunshine in one of our City Gardens. Then came ten days of stormy weather followed by a

spell of Spring in mid-Winter. The day following the shortest of the year was a lovely spring-like day, with the birds singing in every garden. Given a fine day in December the thrush scents the Spring and begins to get ready its song. Three mornings before Christmas I waked to the singing of a thrush in my own little garden-patch, and in the Garden of my love, my "dearest lady," they were singing all the days.

The flowers, too, were beginning to sing their songs. The Christmas Roses were in full bloom in the Garden all December, since the middle of November indeed. One of the foremost heralds of Spring, a white runner fleet of foot, in haste to make the world glad long ere Christmas comes, I never see it without a leap at the heart that tells me Winter is letting loose the children of our dreams. Soon the snowdrops will be here, and the primroses, and the cowslips, and all their beauteous following. In a sheltered nook behind the Keeper's House on the hill, some early rhododendrons were already in bloom, running with red joy to tell the coming splendour. And, in the Rock Garden, quite a number of the prophets of Spring were pro-

claiming the advent of a better day. This interlacing of the seasons, laughter of the kind-hearted Mother in the dead of the dark, birth of Spring in Winter, what is it but a miracle of wonder, a rebuke to the blind, an astonishment to the foolish? So rich is Nature, and so prodigal of her wealth, she can show us Spring and Summer in the heart of Winter and all the seasons of the year interlaced in one.

On the last day of the old year I came to see the lights fade in our City Garden. Whatever the year had been, or whatever it had brought, whatever its vagaries of weather, joy, or sorrow, it came to its end in sunlight. I had waked to the singing of my thrush and came down to breathe a box of violets fresh from a Warwickshire garden. The morning was dull, but when I walked through the Garden in the last hour of the day it was flooded with sunshine. A thrush was singing its even-song. The trees were swaying in the breeze and the wind gently sighing on the hill. In the hollow where the poplars grow there was a hush, a stillness like the House of Prayer, a silence in which one waited to hear Christ speak. In the spinney, by the Rock Garden, a red rhodo-

dendron was glowing, like a fire whereat to warm our hands ere we met the dark.

In the shelter of the wood and the quiet of the fading light I stood and listened. The trees were vocal with birds, piping the passing of the year: the wood a Temple of Song. The Christmas roses were bearing their white blooms to fling at the feet of the passing king. The first spikes of green of a thousand bulbs were peeping through the soil, ready to catch their first sight of the coming year. In the Rock Garden, the Wizard had passed before me, and lit his candles here and there, tiny patches of flowers white, red, and yellow, to light the Old Year to its sleep.

On the hill, overlooking the Garden and the City, I watched the Old Year pass. The sun set. The twilight deepened. One by one, in the gathering gloom, the lamps of the City were lit. Grey clouds low down in the west; clear blue sky above; and afterglow of the far-spent Day kissing the face of Doom, all took the eye in swift succession. And then the dark, the sheltering, healing dark. Quietly and peacefully, like a king not afraid to meet the dark, so died the Old Year. And so went out

with the light all the hopes and fears of another year of every soul within, without, the City wall.

Yet was I not afraid, but turned and culled this flower from a wise little book for my gladdening:

"The man is sleeping peacefully in his furs, but it is time we were turning for home.

" 'Then we shan't get any violets this time?' says W. V. with a sly gleam in her eyes.

"Oh, little woman, yes; the woods and the world are full of the smell of violets."

To the smell of violets the New Year dawned, and to the song of my thrush I waked, again, three days running, the first three days of the new year. Three bright, beautiful, sunny days they were, as if to sing of hope and cheer the eyes of the toilers as they faced the tasks of the unknown year.

Then came a week of wind-storms, followed by a great snow-storm, Saturday, January 11th, with the heaviest fall we have known for years. In the City we escaped with a light covering, though on the Pentlands and on Arthur's Seat it lay a foot deep in many places. In the Garden it was lovely, one of the most beautiful sights

of the year. White as the garments of Christ on the storied hill, "so as no fuller on earth can white them," the Garden, truly, was transfigured. Dressed in lovely cloak of ermine my "dearest lady" was lovelier than ever. All over the lawns, on every shrub and tree, on every tapering branch, the snow lay, all Sunday. But on Monday, when I entered the Garden for the first time in the New Year, my lady had begun to tire of ermine and was turning her thoughts to her well-loved green. The snow had fallen from the shrubs and trees, had melted on the paths, and lay only an inch or two deep on some of the sheltered lawns. The gardeners had already begun to turn over the brown earth in the beds, and this showed up, fresh and moist, against the all-surrounding white and green.

The sunny days of the opening year told their story in the Garden, all the more brightly, methought, in presence of the winter-snow. Many of the shrubs were in leaf, the spiræa and ribes; and three, at least, were in bloom, the yellow Jasmine, red Japonica, and Lonicera. In bloom, also, were many of our so-called Spring-flowers, gillyflower, polyanthus,

some lovely primula, red pæonies, and pale purple anemones. Through the brown earth irises and narcissi of many kinds were showing. And, above all, fairer than all to me, I found my first snowdrops to-day, the first in the open Garden, in my beloved Spinney and by a tree-root on the broad eastern path. One of the many courteous servants of the King who keep the Garden told me they had been out eight or nine days. They had unfolded their beauty in the sunny days of the opening year.

White as the snow itself and touched with lovely green, no wonder our poets love the snowdrop and break into song at its sight. Wordsworth has a fine sonnet, "To a Snowdrop"—"Lone flower, hemmed in with snows and white as they"—in which he speaks of its chastity and modest grace and calls it the

"Venturous harbinger of Spring,
And pensive monitor of fleeting years."

James Montgomery has some lines on it too, and calls it the "Morning Star of Flowers." But, every year, when I see my "Little Lady" for the first time, I touch my lyre and sing of her simply thus:

WINTER IN A CITY GARDEN

Little Lady of the Snow,
Little maiden dressed in green,
Thou hast made my heart to glow,
Thou shalt henceforth be my Queen.

But a Snowdrop kissed of God,
Thou hast kissed my life with joy;
But a childling of the clod,
Thou art deep in Heaven's employ.

Out of Earth thou lift'st thy song,
Out of Winter sing'st of Spring,
Smilest, 'Though the dark be long,
Soon the lengthened days will sing.'

Through the mist and through the hour
Thou dost speak of hope so coy,
Calling, 'Spring is at thy door,'
Thou dost make me sing for joy.

Little Lady of the Snow,
Little maiden dressed in green,
Thou hast made my heart to glow,
Thou shalt henceforth be my Queen.

Ten days later it was snowing again. The hills and the Gardens were white, while the City streets were filled with slush. The day following it rained hard, and snow and slush alike

disappeared from Garden and street. It was one of the dullest, darkest, most miserable days of Winter; yet, such is the variableness of our northern climate, it was followed by a lovely bright sunny day, sunlight from morn till set. A week later came the end of the month and the end of Winter. To let us see that he had not emptied himself of his wonders, the Snow-King waked us to a white world again. Every hill and tree was covered with snow, and every chimney and roof in the City white with beauty. The sun broke through ere noon and shone for an hour. Then snow, at intervals, in the gathering dark, till the night came on in a whirlwind of sleet and rain, and every bird in the Garden thought the day of its nesting never would come.

But, to-day, the Garden is flooded with sunshine, and every child of the Great Mother is stretching itself in sleep and stirring to wake. "Lo, the winter is past; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come."

ENDYMION

A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits.

KEATS

EPILOGUE BY J. R. AITKEN

ONE OF OUR MODERN WRITers has speculated on the effect in human character of a series of beautiful sunsets. He came to the conclusion that the gold and saffron of the setting sun remain with us, and colour our thoughts and hopes in days and years to come. Once the glory enters, we can never be the same. Unconsciously, our lives are shaped by the sunsets of long ago. Likewise I find myself speculating on the effect of the days spent in our City Garden. And I have come to the conclusion that Keats is right. "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." We must always be the better for having looked on a beautiful thing. Its "joy" remains with us. "Its loveliness increases; it will never pass into nothingness." Looked at through the haze of memory, it will take on new "beauty" and new "joy." Looked at through the golden light of hope, it will pass into thoughts and deeds yet unborn. Never a flower do we see but it leaves us other than we were. Never a tree watch unfold itself in Spring, put on its Summer glory, unrobe in Autumn, and stand before us naked in Winter, but it enters our life. Never a walk do we take in a Garden,

and hear God "speak," but we pass to our tasks better men. We look back on the days spent in our City Garden, and behold our life in the making, touched by a snowdrop, fashioned by a primrose, hewn by the wind. We look forward to the years that are to be, and carry with us the fragrance of sweetbriar, the loveliness of the rose, the glory of the daffodil. We can never be the same.

More. Not only will it "never pass," but it will go before us, run with silent feet into the unbegotten, and keep

" A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health and quiet breathing."

There is nothing more elusive than a thing of beauty: we can never get away from it. Nothing more gracious than a flower: it will "keep a bower quiet for us." Nothing more comforting than a bed of roses: it will give us "sleep full of sweet dreams." Nothing more joyous than a Garden: it will give us "health and quiet breathing." Kind, as she is beautiful, the Great Mother gives with lavish hand to all who love her. Gracious, as she is kind, she goes before us, strews our path with flowers,

and makes ready for our coming. She will never leave us or forsake us; will never see us comfortless; but "still will keep a bower quiet for us, and a sleep full of sweet dreams."

So, shall I walk in my City Garden and feast my heart upon the flowers. So, face the sorrows of the street with the vision of the rose. And so, commend my "charmer" to all who love the beautiful and good—that they, too, may meet the toil of the City with heart and hope.

"Bear a Lily in thy hand,
Gates of brass cannot withstand
One touch of that magic wand."

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